

West Africa

Forecasts for insecurity and conflict in 2014



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Open Briefing
27 Old Gloucester Street
Bloomsbury
London WC1N 3AX
United Kingdom

Tel +44 (0)20 7193 9805
info@openbriefing.org

www.openbriefing.org

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Lead author: Gustavo Plácido dos Santos

Project leader: Nick Branson

Editor: Chris Abbott

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Introduction

West Africa has experienced a chequered history since independence. A small number of regimes have been well governed and entrenched democratic values over the past two decades. But the high prevalence of coups d'état during the second half of the twentieth century has ensured that the military retains a presence in the national politics of many West African states, undermining the emergence of truly accountable governments. West Africa is also known for its abundant natural resources, including timber, fish, oil, gas and minerals, which make the region significant for global business. But widespread poverty endures across the region, despite this natural wealth.

Poverty and social and political exclusion have given rise to self-determination movements and prolonged insurgencies, such as in the oil-rich Niger Delta and the Sahel. International jihadist movements have capitalised on this and have been able to destabilise countries such as Mali and Niger. The transnational threat has been multiplied by the involvement of these groups in smuggling and maritime piracy. West African states will have to tackle the root causes of insecurity in order to avoid further instability and possible spill-overs to other countries and regions.

Conflict and insecurity is a product of a combination of volatile factors. Some narratives have painted West Africa as a region where conflict and insecurity occur naturally due to ethnic tensions and porous borders; in reality, the underlying sources and drivers of instability are critical to understanding events. This study from Open Briefing attempts to avoid generalisations by analysing specific factors and identifying forecasts for individual countries in the region.

The drivers that are examined range from those influencing ongoing events to more structural long-term factors. Hence this report draws on a number of themes, including: levels of poverty; socio-political instability; the democratic deficit; incomplete transitions from autocracy to democracy; the role of the armed forces; youth bulges; post-conflict environments; the bad neighbourhood factor; the quality of governance; the impact of natural resources; border disputes; Islamic extremism and insurgencies; narco-trafficking; and small-arms flows. These factors are analysed with the purpose of understanding the weight that they have in shaping the country's recent history and its likely future.



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Over 50 carefully vetted sources of qualitative and quantitative data were used throughout this study, with numerous other local sources used for each individual country. Statistics and profiles from sources such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Economist Intelligence Unit and the annual *African Economic Outlook*, helped to identify the main features of a country. News articles from the BBC, Al Jazeera, Reuters, Africa Confidential and local media, provided a descriptive element that contributed to a better understanding of the dynamics of insecurity along the time frame covered by this study. Intelligence and risk companies, such as Control Risks and red24, provided up-to-date, on-the-ground security overviews. And civil society organisations, such as the International Crisis Group, Human Rights Watch, Global Witness and local NGOs, provided background information on many of the factors outlined in the previous paragraph.

The forecasts set out in this synthesis report derive from the application of the cone of plausibility method, which consists of isolating the main drivers that shape events in a country and enables the formulation of fair assumptions.

The forecasts set out in this synthesis report derive from the application of the **cone of plausibility method**, which consists of isolating the main drivers that shape events in a country and enables the formulation of fair assumptions. From these assumptions, three types of scenarios for 2014 have been developed: the **baseline**, which is the most likely outcome; a **plausible alternative**, which is possible but less likely; and **wildcards**, which are possible but unlikely, and usually bring about dramatic outcomes. Each of the scenarios is built around different assumptions for the same drivers, which allowed for the generation of differentiated but not impossible scenarios. These variables were applied according to specific features within a country. Also included are brief country overviews and short analyses of the origins of current insecurity in each case.

This synthesis report focusses on those countries whose drivers and internal volatility are likely to create substantial levels of insecurity and conflict over 2014. Stable mainland states such as Ghana, Benin, Togo and the Gambia are therefore excluded, as are the prosperous island states of Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe, and the wealthy oil exporters Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. The following pages outline the key findings for **Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.**

This briefing paper is the first in three planned reports on insecurity and conflict in West, Central and Southern Africa during 2014.

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso has an estimated population of 16 million and ranks 183 of 187 in the UNPD's Human Development Index. Half of the populations live in poverty, while youth unemployment is 25%. The economy of Burkina Faso is dependent on agricultural production, particularly cotton, and rising gold exports. This makes economic growth highly dependent on international markets and subject to volatility from a range of factors, including unfavourable weather and regional instability.¹

Origins of insecurity

Burkina Faso is a major player in West Africa and the Sahel region. In recent years the country has aligned itself with the West as an ally in the defence of regional stability. Burkina Faso is now at the centre of Western foreign policy, which, in turn, makes Burkina Faso a potential target of international terrorist networks. The inflow of Malian refugees and Jihadist ideas and weaponry, coupled with droughts that have ravaged the Sahel, have contributed to the destabilisation and militarisation of the northern region of Burkina Faso.

President Blaise Compaoré's 24-year rule has recently witnessed unprecedented social and military disturbances. Widespread poverty and underdevelopment has mobilised political opposition and civil society. The extent of the concessions made by the regime demonstrates the degree to which the president fears events will spiral out of control. Tensions are once again on the rise as prominent members of the ruling party have resigned, while a new political party captured the support of a significant share of the population during the last elections.

Major protagonists and recent developments

Compaoré, in power since 1987, won the November 2010 elections with over 80% of the vote. In order to be able to run for his fifth term, Compaoré and his party – the Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP) – stated their intention to revise Article 37 of the constitution, which restricts the number of presidential terms in office. Compaoré's ruling CDP has dominated politics in the West African country for more than 20 years and, in December 2012, won a comfortable majority in legislative elections; however, this was too slim for the unilateral removal of the term limit.

The new Union for Progress and Change (UPC), established in 2010 by former Finance Minister Zéphirin Diabré, became the second leading political party. Diabré declared his willingness to ally with those who want a democratic alternative. On 5 January 2014, 75 prominent political figures resigned from the CDP citing their frustration with the proposed constitutional amendment and authoritarianism inside the party. These include the former president of the National Assembly, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, the former capital city's mayor, Simon Compaoré (unrelated to the president), Salif Diallo, a former minister of state, and Victor Tiendrébeogo, the traditional king of the Mossi, the largest ethnic group in the country.²

Social instability has risen since 2011, which brought about an unprecedented level of activism by civil society and the armed forces. Students rioted countrywide and the military mutinied in protests against unpaid wages. Later that year, teachers and police joined the protests. On 18 January 2014, thousands of people took part in the largest opposition-led protests in decades across the capital, Ouagadougou, against the government's intention to revise Article 37 of the constitution.³

Compaoré is said to have prepared for his exit from the political scene. His brother and adviser for 24 years, François, is the favourite to succeed him, as he can protect Blaise from prosecution. However, the prospect of a Compaoré dynasty will be decried by CDP dissenters and the established opposition.

Compaoré has been an important ally to Western powers in the region. He has contributed to resolving regional crises and helped the United States and France monitor the security situation in the Sahel and Sahara. Further, he has attempted to broker a truce between Tuareg and Islamic insurgents from northern Mali. A post-Compaoré scenario represents a vital issue for Western foreign policy and interests in the region.

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Scenarios for 2014

Baseline: Compaoré abides by the constitution and endorse his brother François.

Plausible alternative: Compaoré ignores opposing forces and pushes for a constitutional revision that allows him to run for another term in office.

Regardless of the path chosen, greater dissent emerges within the ruling party and results in further resignations. Opposition-led protests continue to increase, fed by deteriorating social and economic conditions, and a sense that the ruling party is weakened. Popular protests escalate into violent confrontations between supporters of Compaoré and the opposition.

Wildcards:

- (1) France, which retains influence across the region, decides that it is time to withdraw their support for Compaoré and plan for the future. Diabré, the leader of the opposition UPC, was chairman of the Africa and Middle East Regions at the French state-owned nuclear company Areva, which operates across the Sahel and was a major reason for the 2013 French intervention in Niger. Diabré is willing to prolong Françafrique and receives clandestine or overt French support and takes power in 2014 or, at the latest, following presidential elections in 2015.
- (2) France steeply reduces its military presence in the region, driven to a large extent by the crisis in the Central African Republic and French internal politics. As a result, border crossings sharply increase and further undermine stability in the north of Burkina Faso.

Cameroon

Cameroon ranks 150 out of 186 in the Human Development Index and the country's GDP is expected to grow by 5% in 2014, driven by the oil sector and strong domestic demand.⁴ However, oil revenues have failed to be efficiently channelled into other productive sectors, such as agriculture, which has recently suffered from floods in the north of the country. Agriculture employs the majority of the population and is the largest contributor to the country's GDP. Conversely, the oil sector contributes only 6% to GDP and comprises around 40% of export earnings.⁵

Origins of insecurity

President Paul Biya has recently strengthened his 31-year hold on the leadership by winning parliamentary and presidential elections by a landslide. Political opposition has proven to be too weak and fragmented to pose a real threat at the ballot box. Although the political environment seems to be favourable to Biya, there are various foci of insecurity. Violence in neighbouring countries, such as Nigeria and the Central Africa Republic (CAR), has resulted in the inflow of insurgent groups and refugees, destabilising the region. In addition, the oil-rich Bakassi peninsula has been a source of instability since the transfer of sovereignty from Nigeria to Cameroon.

Major protagonists and recent developments

Leader of the Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Camerounais' (RDPC), Biya has also been President of Cameroon since 1982. In October 2011, he won the presidential elections with 78% of the vote, while his main rival, John Fru Ndi, leader of the Social Democratic Front, won 10.7%. The RDPC won 56 out of 70 seats in the senate and 148 of 180 seats in the national assembly.

The military crackdown in northeastern Nigeria has had two major effects: heavy fighting along the border has caused villages in northern Cameroon to become deserted; and insurgents have crossed the border into Cameroon in search for a safe haven where they can reorganise. Furthermore, on Cameroon's east lies the violence-ravaged CAR. In addition to a massive inflow of refugees, CAR rebels have moved towards Cameroon, due to a French-backed military crackdown. In November 2013, CAR rebel forces crossed into Cameroon to try to release a rebel leader arrested for establishing a base in the country. Rebels also often raid villages across the border in search of food. In order to counter these two fronts, security and surveillance was reinforced along the borders. Trade and people's livelihoods have been severely affected by the insecurity.

In 2002, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that the oil-rich Bakassi peninsula, claimed by both Cameroon and Nigeria since the 1960s, would be handed over to Cameroon. The peninsula was formally handed over in August 2013. However, since Nigerian security forces left, Cameroonian authorities have targeted Nigerians – who comprise the majority of the population – by attacking civilians, imposing heavy taxes, disrupting fishing activities and renaming localities. Small militias that oppose the decision to hand over the peninsula have clashed with the Cameroonian security forces.⁶

Scenarios for 2014

Baseline: Biya remains unchallenged in the short to medium term; the opposition is still too divided to pose a challenge and Cameroon is one of the most stable countries in the region. However, the disparity between development in urban centres and rural areas threatens long-term stability.

The country's security is highly dependent on events in CAR and northeast Nigeria. Insurgent groups attempt to base themselves in Cameroon and the inflow of refugees adversely affects the people's livelihoods in the region, as resources are scarce.

Plausible alternative: Biya abdicates or dies in 2014 (he is 80 years old). This leads to profound political instability around the issue of succession.

Wildcard: Cameroon encourages international investors to exploit the vast wealth of the Bakassi peninsula, with little regard for the well-being of the majority-Nigerian population, which results in clashes with security forces. In response, Nigeria launches a military action for the protection of its citizens in the region or for access to natural resources.

The country's security is highly dependent on events in the Central African Republic and northeast Nigeria.

Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire, or Ivory Coast, has an estimated population of 20 million.⁷ It was once one of West Africa's economic powerhouses and a centre of political stability in a difficult neighbourhood. Today, however, the country ranks 168 of 186 in the Human Development Index, and 60% of Ivoirians aged between 15 and 35 are unemployed.⁸ Its status as the world's top cocoa producer provides a major source of revenue, and the country is also a significant producer and exporter of cashew nuts, coffee beans and palm oil; in fact, Côte d'Ivoire relies heavily on agricultural activities. In addition, it has oil reserves and deposits of gold, diamonds and iron ore.

Origins of insecurity

Côte d'Ivoire is still recovering from the 2002-07 civil war that split the country into the rebel-held north and the government-held south. This stemmed from the introduction of the policy of *Ivoirité*, which distinguished those from ethnic groups deemed to be indigenous to Côte d'Ivoire from those who were not, coupled with an economic recession largely due to a steep decrease in the price of cocoa in international markets. The end of conflict brought about the massive challenges of reintegrating ex-combatants into civilian life and halting weapons flows across the territory. It also led thousands of refugees to return to their former lands only to find that these were illegally occupied by others, something that is at the core of violent intercommunal clashes.

Intercommunal tensions were also exacerbated by the detention of former president Laurent Gbagbo and his transfer to the International Criminal Court (ICC). After nearly two years in detention with trial, the ICC has recently ruled that Gbagbo must remain behind bars while it gathers concrete evidence of crimes against humanity. Adding to this the fact that all but one of the Ivoirians currently under trial in The Hague or issued with an ICC arrest warrant are pro-Gbagbo, creates a sense of victor's justice and international bias towards the incumbent president, Alassane Dramane Ouattara (known as ADO). Moreover, despite an astonishing 9.8% GDP growth in 2012, following a contraction of 5% in previous years due to post-election violence, the prices of staple goods, electricity, education and healthcare have sharply increased,⁹ raising fears of social discontent in urban centres.

Major protagonists and recent developments

In December 2010, Ouattara, the former prime minister of long-time president Félix Houphouët-Boigny, leader of the *Rassemblement des Républicains* (RDR), was elected president of Côte d'Ivoire. He had previously twice been impeded from running for office due to the *Ivoirité* laws. The election results were disputed by the incumbent president, Gbagbo, leader of the *Front Populaire Ivoirien* (FPI). This resulted in violent clashes between party activists and escalated into military warfare, resulting in 3,000 people killed and 500,000 displaced. A few months later Gbagbo was arrested by Ouattara's forces with UN and French support, and handed over to the ICC to face charges of crimes against humanity. Most of Gbagbo's senior officials fled to Ghana.

In December 2011, Ouattara's RDR and his political allies won a parliamentary majority, while the FPI boycotted the elections. Another victor of the elections was Guillaume Soro, the 41-year-old leader of the Forces Nouvelles (FN), which controlled the north during the civil war. Soro had served as prime minister under Gbagbo with his FN incorporated into the national armed forces. However, in 2010 Soro resigned and switched his support to Ouattara's victorious presidential bid. He took office as Ouattara's prime minister and in November 2012 became speaker of the national assembly, and thus constitutionally next in line to succeed Ouattara.¹⁰

A large majority of refugees, estimated at 200,000,¹¹ are Guéré, an ethnic group that is predominantly concentrated in western Côte d'Ivoire and regarded as loyal to Gbagbo. These refugees fled Côte d'Ivoire for Liberia during the 2010-11 post-electoral violence and have returned to find their land illegally sold to others or simply taken over by other ethnic and immigrant groups. Intercommunal fighting over land has erupted as a result. Some returnees have settled in government-protected forests, farming the land against national laws. The government has promised to evict all of these illegal forest settlers by 2015,¹² a decision that has the potential to worsen the situation on the ground.

The vast numbers of refugees yet to return also provide an opportunity for Gbagbo loyalists. Since 2010 pro-Gbagbo militias have undertaken cross-border attacks on Ivorian territory, with funding and operations based in neighbouring Ghana. Moreover, in 2012 government forces allegedly uncovered a number of plots linked to Liberian mercenaries and Ivorian militias, which were orchestrated by close associates of Gbagbo based in Ghana. In March 2013, cross-border land incursions by Ivorian fighters and Liberian mercenaries targeted those who had occupied vacant land and those responsible for dispossession. On the other hand, pro-Ouattara groups, such as the Dozos – a mostly Muslim group widely discriminated against under the Ivoirité, have attacked villages and refugee camps mainly comprised of Guéré.¹³

In 2012, 4,000 former combatants were disarmed and demobilised, but around 65,000 remain. Ouattara aims to disarm 30,000 in 2013-14. Nonetheless, the dismissal of a great number of troops, along with a lack of vocational skills programmes and jobs, has resulted in banditry levels more than doubling over 2012-13. This is a significant issue when considered alongside the widespread diffusion of weapons across the territory.¹⁴

Scenarios for 2014

Baseline: Soro endorses Ouattara and leads his presidential campaign, preparing himself for the following elections. Ouattara recognises how essential Soro is to countering the pro-Gbagbo opposition and enticing a younger generation.

Regardless of amounting financial and operational challenges, pro-Gbagbo activists maintain their cross-border operations in order to destabilise Ouattara's rule. Return for those activists is out of question since the prime minister declared that there would be no collective amnesty. Gbagbo remains in The Hague throughout 2014, in great part due to pressure from the United States and France.

Clashes over land increase as families seek their 'stolen' source of subsistence. However, such clashes are with decreasing operational and financial support from Gbagbo supporters.

An increasing number of refugees return to Côte d'Ivoire. Clashes over land increase as families seek their 'stolen' source of subsistence. However, such clashes are with decreasing operational and financial support from Gbagbo supporters. On the other hand, pro-Ouattara groups, such as the Dozos, continue their attacks on villages and refugee camps seen as being mostly Guéré and therefore pro-Gbagbo. The eviction of illegal forest settlers during 2014 causes further violent clashes over land. Intercommunal tensions increase as the population fails to find means of sustenance.

The ambitious goal proclaimed by Ouattara of disarming 30,000 former combatants creates widespread insecurity across the country, as reintegration programmes are often inefficient in the short term. Although agricultural exports grow, benefiting farmers across the country, intercommunal violence and rising prices prolong social instability. Urban areas are especially affected by the rising cost of electricity, education, healthcare and staple goods.

Plausible alternative: The public discussion around the naming of Soro as head of Ouattara's presidential campaign displeases Ouattara's close allies. To give Soro such a position will elevate him above many others. It will provide him with a privileged position to run for leadership of the party, as Ouattara is set to abdicate from the party's leadership in order to focus more on his role as the country's head of state.

As one of the favourites to succeed Ouattara, Amadou Gon Coulibaly, secretary general to the presidency and head of the 2010 presidential campaign, is the fiercest opponent to Soro's rise. Nevertheless, Ouattara needs to continue to show his public support for Soro in order to ensure a victory in the 2015 elections. The disagreement among members of the ruling party and government, together with rising prices, proves an opportunity for spoilers from the Gbagbo camp to undermine the leadership.

Wildcards:

- (1) The African Union's continued resistance to ICC indictments, combined with Gbagbo's call for a conditional release due to poor health, results in the return of the former president to the political scene, disrupting the post-conflict consensus. The military is required to maintain law and order by suppressing supporters from the Jeune Patriotes, a pro-Gbagbo quasi-militia of Ivorian youth based in Abidjan.
- (2) Intercommunal clashes on the country's porous borders escalate to a level that requires intervention from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). ECOWAS intervenes and brokers a peace agreement between returning Gbagbo supporters dispossessed of their land and those occupying it. Soro is decisive in this arrangement, since he poses the support needed for a government to be elected and stay in power.

Guinea-Bissau

Guinea-Bissau, with a population of 1.6 million, is one of the most impoverished and underdeveloped countries in Africa.¹⁵ It has massive foreign debts and ranks 176 of 186 in the Human Development Index. Agriculture accounts for 90% of the country's export revenues, mostly comprised of cashew nuts, and this employs 80% of its population. 70% of the national budget is financed through foreign aid. Guinea-Bissau's armed forces are estimated to number between 5,500 and 8,000.¹⁶

Origins of insecurity

Guinea-Bissau's post-independence history has been marred by military coups to such an extent that no leader has completed a full term since 1980. The military has become so influential that it is perceived to be virtually the only means of individual advancement, which in part explains the large size of the armed forces. The army remains determined to prevent any opposition to its leadership. Dependence on income from cashew crops makes the economy highly susceptible to market volatility – demand for cashew nuts has recently decreased, affecting rural households that depend on their sale to survive. In addition, low national revenue leads to an extreme reliance on foreign aid to finance the country's budget. Since aid is channelled through government institutions, access to political power is highly desirable to the country's elite. The corruption resulting from this scramble for revenues has been intensified by trans-Atlantic drug trafficking, which is deeply connected to the military according to US intelligence.

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Recent history and major protagonists

The most recent coup d'état occurred on 13 April 2012. It immediately followed the first round of the presidential elections, which had put the leader of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), Carlos Gomes Júnior, ahead with 49% of the votes. President of the PAIGC since 2002, Gomes Júnior was also the country's prime minister from 2008 to 2012 when he resigned in order to run in the presidential elections. As prime minister, Gomes Júnior implemented a programme of reform and modernisation of the country's security forces, including reducing the number of serving personnel. The European Union and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) provided most of the financial, technical and personnel support for the programme. However, the military became disgruntled with the prospect of their power being curtailed and did not allow the second round of reforms to proceed. Instead, Gomes Júnior was arrested.

A one-year transition period was agreed to resolve the impasse. Brokered by ECOWAS, it was originally accepted by all parties except the PAIGC. The agreement stipulated that Manuel Serifo Nhamadjo would be appointed interim president by the army. Nhamadjo was president of the national assembly and ranked third, with 16% of the votes, in the first round of the aborted presidential election. The PAIGC later agreed to be part of the transitional government. However, the EU and the UN did not recognise this government. Aid donations were suspended until a democratically-elected government was put in place. ECOWAS, by contrast, urged international recognition for the government of Guinea-Bissau and increased financial support to the country as negotiations began to reform the security sector.

The country is further hampered by the fact that it is now a major drug distribution centre for Europe. Operations are run by Latin American drug cartels that benefit from the virtually inexistent rule of law and highly inefficient and corrupt security forces, which have themselves become complicit in the cartels' operations. In April 2013, a former chief of the navy, Rear Admiral Jose Americo Bubo Na Tchuto, was arrested in international waters off Cape Verde in a US operation. The Chief of Army Staff, General Antonio Indjai, who led a mutiny in 2010 ousting the previous head of the army and later spearheaded the 2012 coup, has been charged by the US government with narco-trafficking and with providing support to the FARC in Colombia.¹⁷ The army chief has disputed accusations of involvement in the drug trade and has refused to stand-down.

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Gomes Júnior is currently exiled in Portugal but announced his willingness to return to Guinea-Bissau in order to run for the presidential elections initially scheduled for November 2013 but subsequently postponed to March 2014 and later to April 2014. Nonetheless, in the run-up to the elections for the PAIGC's secretary-general, he publicly declared his support for the eventual winner, Domingos Simões Pereira, a former minister in Gomes Júnior's cabinet and former executive-secretary of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP).¹⁸ This move suggests that Gomes Júnior will give his support to Pereira for the presidential elections.

There are three factors that will play an essential role in the forthcoming elections. First, the current acting president was given office by the military. Second, a faction of the PAIGC is currently part of the transitional government, thus undermining party support for Pereira as an opposition figure, due to Gomes Júnior's backing. Third, the independence or not of the Electoral Commission is fundamental, since it is known that the military exerts a powerful influence on every political institution in the country.

Scenarios for 2014

Baseline: Pereira is not elected president thanks to political manoeuvring by the regime, largely motivated by Gomes Júnior's backing and influence. Instead, a military-backed government, including a faction of the PAIGC, is the outcome. The military does its utmost to retain its influence in national politics and enjoy the perks of such position. But the military also recognises the necessity of cooperating with ECOWAS in order to avoid further isolation. ECOWAS consolidates its relationship with the new regime by smoothing the reform of the armed forces.

The ECOWAS-sponsored reform leads to a reduction in the numbers serving in the army. Such a reduction helps to relieve the country's budget. However, senior military commanders retain key offices. The EU and UN soften the sanctions but continue to be suspicious of the electoral process and aftermath, particularly the level of the military's influence and its future role. Aid is partially or fully resumed following the international community's re-engagement, so as to prevent social unrest in the country, since it is a vital source of public sector salaries.

Ongoing international sanctions and the current drop in cashew exports have significant impacts on the country's stability. Lack of revenues derived from exports means that the government faces a greater challenge in financing basic services. It also means that people feel the need to leave unprofitable farms and migrate to the cities, creating a massive influx of labour into places that cannot absorb them.

Guinea-Bissau's government will need to diversify its economy and trade partners but to do so will take time. As the economy fails to improve, social protests demanding government support take place. Such protests are in turn silenced by the security forces. Economic development takes a back seat while the new military-backed government focusses on securing its legitimacy across the international community.

Drug trafficking is gradually reduced. More efficient security forces and the continued presence of the United States in international waters forces the drug cartels to search for other territories from which they can operate with less risk. Nonetheless, the top echelons of the army look for ways to attract the continued presence of the drug cartels, as the profits are hugely attractive.

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Plausible alternative: The popular support behind Gomes Júnior ensures Pereira wins the presidential election. The international community recognises the new government and re-engages with the country. Both the EU and UN remove international sanctions and donors increase foreign aid allocations to development programmes. A comprehensive programme aimed at diversifying the economy and trade partners is implemented. Such a programme has the potential to tackle the problem of dependency on cashew exports in the medium term.

The process of reforming the armed forces is begun, despite being strongly opposed by high-ranking military officials. An agreement is reached between the civilian government and the military in order to guarantee a sustainable and constructive reform. This involves a form of power sharing, whereby military officials are granted government positions or funds. Nonetheless, military influence is greatly checked.

Political stability and reform of the armed forces lead to the drug cartels transferring the bulk of their operations to other neighbouring countries in West Africa, such as Guinea-Conakry. As the drug-related business attraction fades away, attention turns to resolving national problems. Impoverishment and underdevelopment are exacerbated when military reform forces thousands of men to leave the armed forces. Popular protests and criminal activities increase in the absence of a comprehensive social programme that provides vocational skills and other occupational activities for those now unemployed. The security forces are called upon to curb such activities and thus the military gains some leverage in the political scene, spurring fears that the armed forces might once again re-enter national politics.

Wildcard: Ethnic loyalties within the military become more obvious as resources become scarcer. The main ethnic group, the Balanta, to which Indjai belongs, maintain their hold on the limited resources available. Factions within the army clash in a struggle for greater access to resources and, most importantly, to the vast wealth derived from drug trade. A civil war erupts and ECOWAS is forced to intervene with the reinforcement of the peacekeeping force in the country.

Guinea

Guinea has an estimated population of 11.3 million, 45% of which are aged between 15 and 19 years old. It ranks 178 of 186 on the Human Development Index, one of the most impoverished countries in West Africa. Nearly 80% of the population depend on agriculture, a sector that contributes less than 20% of the GDP. Rich in mineral resources, mining accounts for 20% of Guinea's GDP, 80% of foreign exchange and 30% of export revenues.¹⁹ The country has the largest untapped iron ore reserves in the world. In 2012, the international financial institutions reduced Guinea's foreign debt by 99%.²⁰

Origins of insecurity

The scramble for Guinean minerals has resulted in a massive inflow of investment from foreign mining companies. This new-found wealth brought about two consequences. First, it dealt a death blow to economic diversification, thus creating an overwhelming dependency on mineral extraction. Second, it spurred the creation of 'relationships of interest', which enriched a few and impoverished the majority. At the same time, agriculture was neglected, though it still employs the majority of the population.

Access to the country's wealth has served as a motivation for the opposition parties and armed forces to compete for political power. The 2008-10 military junta benefited the armed forces more than any other institution in the country. The military will do its utmost to maintain a position of influence in national politics despite the fact that the two-year-long military regime was marked by economic mismanagement, massive public spending and rising debt. Furthermore, the perception of lack of benefits derived from the country's mineral wealth, leads the population to assemble along ethnic lines, with hostilities a frequent source of insecurity.

Major protagonists and recent developments

In November 2010, Alpha Condé, leader of the Rally of the Guinean People (RGP), was elected president of Guinea, defeating Cellou Dalein Diallo, president of the Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG). The UFDG and its supporters did not accept the results and violent protests escalated into clashes in the capital, Conakry, and quickly spread to other parts of the country. The repeated postponing of parliamentary elections fed the tensions, which had an embedded ethnic element.

Condé had made two pre-election promises: to reform the security forces and to re-negotiate mining contracts. However, such measures posed a threat to established interests. In July 2011, gunmen attacked Condé's residence in an operation allegedly led and organised by the military. A former army chief and other individuals close to Lassana Conté's military regime were arrested some hours after the attack. The head of treasury, known for his fight against corruption, and the Chief of the Armed Forces, who was tasked with reforming the military, were assassinated.²¹

In July 2013, the government and the opposition reached an agreement that led to an end to mass protests and scheduled parliamentary elections. Condé and his RPG, mainly supported by the Malinké ethnic group, won the elections and appointed various kin to top military and political positions. Diallo's UFDG overwhelmingly won in Moyenne Guinée, the stronghold of the Fula/Peul.²² The opposition demanded an annulment and protested in the streets. However, following appeals by the international community, the opposition abandoned the protests and took the case to the Supreme Court, which later reaffirmed Condé's victory.

Tensions escalated in July 2013 in the Guinée forestière region, near the border with Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. Communal fighting erupted in Koulé between the region's two largest groups – the Guerzés (mostly Christians and animists) and the Konianké (mostly Muslims) – and rapidly spread to the regional capital N'Zérékoré, which caused the military to intervene. These two groups have clashed since the end of the Liberian civil war. The Konianké are seen as foreigners, believed to belong to the Malinké ethnic community in Liberia that supported the rebels fighting Charles Taylor, whereas forces loyal to Taylor were largely supported by the Guerzé.²³ Koulé, near the Zagota mining site, was also the focus of violent clashes in August 2012, when indigenous people clashed with migrant workers over priority of access to the new jobs created by the mining project.

An amended mining code targets the renegotiation of contracts deemed to have been illicitly acquired and also intends to prevent corruption and improve transparency in contract awarding.²⁴ The government is at the moment locked in a dispute with Beny Steinmetz's BSG Resources, which has been accused of bribing officials during the junta era in order to secure half of the Simandou mining field, one of the world's richest undeveloped deposits of iron ore. In turn, BSG Resources has accused the government of attempting to illegally confiscate and nationalise the mines. It is also worth noting that some foreign companies have already left the country due to mining reform and/or insecurity in mining sites. The government is now looking for new investors and the Gulf countries are seen as main candidates.²⁵

Scenarios for 2014

Baseline: Political grievances continue to be expressed through legal channels, despite the recent decision by the Supreme Court to validate the presidential election results, partly due to international pressure and to avoid further bloodshed. The opposition focuses on the 2015 presidential elections.

Changes in the mining code, along with the renegotiation and revoking of mining contracts, result in a reduction of investment flows into the country and more companies leaving in search of more viable opportunities. However, non-European mining companies consider this situation to be an opportunity to expand their investments and interests in the mineral-rich country. Despite this, heavy reliance on the mining sector, when coupled with the standoff caused by mining reforms, leads the country to experience a shortfall in revenues, damaging the economy. The government already lacks funds to finance the state apparatus (salaries and patronage system).

Mining-related jobs are increasingly attractive and create large population influxes into mining regions, thus creating conflict with indigenous populations over jobs.

Tensions increase in the border regions and mining sites. Mining-related jobs are increasingly attractive and create large population influxes into mining regions, thus creating conflict with indigenous populations over jobs. In addition, as the economy fails to improve, investment in the mining sector is curtailed and mining operations stalled, the population protest to demand the jobs that fail to be created.

The reform of the armed forces has seriously impacted the military establishment in terms of troops and funding. From an all-powerful institution, it has become less important since 2010. Although they are important to maintain peace in the country, the government does not halt the reforms, as the armed forces role is currently more one of a threat to civilian rule than that of a stability guarantor.

Plausible alternative: The political opposition become too impatient to wait for 2015. Legal channels prove not to be fruitful and the opposition ignores appeals of peace and stability by the international community.

The mining reform and the deteriorating economic situation derived from reduced investment flows is used by the opposition to feed political protests that easily escalate into violent clashes, which follow ethnic lines. As in the past, the government calls upon the armed forces to intervene in the intercommunal violence. The army therefore gains in dominance and the reform of the armed forces is paused, since it is a risk to hinder the military's power under such turbulent circumstances.

Wildcards:

- (1) The interests of the political opposition, armed forces and mining companies combine and a group organise a coup d'état to overthrow Condé.
- (2) The international community impose a political transition and deploy a peacekeeping force. The military seek to retain influence for as long as possible, while the opposition revel in the perks of government.

Liberia

Liberia has recorded impressive gains in terms of human development since 2000 but is still at the bottom of the Human Development Index.²⁶ Recent growth has been driven by the resumption of iron-ore exports. The agriculture, fishery and forestry sectors together represented about 36% of GDP in 2012 and employ the majority of the population. The industrial and manufacturing sectors represent 21% of GDP but employ only 6% of the population.

Origins of insecurity

Although Liberia experienced civil war intermittently between 1989 and 2003, it is now on the path to becoming a stable democracy. Popular protests took place following elections but the opposition was not able to unite and pose a serious challenge. Land grabs, underdevelopment, recent history and the presence of small arms across the country make up a dangerous threat to the country's volatile intercommunal co-existence.

Major protagonists and recent developments

In November 2011, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf won the second round of presidential elections by a landslide, with 90% of the vote, following an opposition boycott. Hundreds of supporters of the major opposition party, the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC), subsequently gathered near the party's headquarters, only to be dispersed by the police, leaving two protesters dead. Despite some progress in terms of diversification of natural resources, low external debt and support from international donors and investors, the country remains beset by poor infrastructure, vulnerable to fluctuations in world commodity prices and endures widespread poverty and unemployment.

The opposition accuses the government of corruption and nepotism. During her first term, Sirleaf revoked all existing timber concessions and introduced new forestry legislation establishing sustainable practices for concessions in order to curb corruption. Paradoxically, under this government more than half of Liberia's forest was conceded to foreign logging companies, often with no permission from local communities.²⁷ Moreover, the country's constitution still allows for the expropriation of customary land for the public interest.

A number of mercenaries returned to Liberia from Côte d'Ivoire after the arrest of former Ivorian president Laurent Gbagbo in 2011. Attacks by pro-Gbagbo militias on Ivorian villages still occur, a fact that escalates regional tensions. According to a report from the UN Panel of Experts on Liberia, the Liberian government has purchased weapons from mercenaries, with the aim of reducing the number of weapons available for cross-border attacks on Côte d'Ivoire.²⁸ However, the weapons were not delivered to the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) for destruction, which has raised suspicions that government officials are keeping them. The UN report also points to the growing illicit arms smuggling in the region, which is pouring weapons into Liberia.

In September 2013, the UN Security Council extended the mandate of the UNMIL peacekeeping force for another year. It also reinforced demands that the Liberian government fully fund the national police force, so that it is prepared to take over responsibility for security. The United Nations expects to withdraw 1,129 troops over the course of this year and to reach 3,730 peacekeepers by mid-2015.

Scenarios for 2014

Baseline: The political opposition is unable to unite and challenge Sirleaf. International support and funding for Sirleaf deters members of the ruling party from abandoning her. The development of industry and manufacturing somewhat appeases the urban population.

Government corruption dominates the scene throughout 2014. The large swathes of forest in Liberia make land concessions attractive for government officials and foreign companies alike. New legislation has proven inefficient in tackling the problem and this does not change in the short term at least. Land disputes become more frequent, giving rise to intercommunal clashes and attacks on foreign companies.

Plausible alternative: Deterred from undertaking cross-border incursions, Liberian mercenaries seek alternative ways to make a living, including crime, which disrupts trade and stability across the forest territories. Coupled with this, the gradual withdrawal of UNMIL forces hinders Liberia's recent positive developments. National security forces are too underfunded and unprepared to take charge of the country's security apparatus. As such, the United Nations is forced to scale back its reduction of UNMIL troop numbers.

Wildcard: The inefficient and easily corrupted security forces allow illegal activities (such as piracy, illicit drug trade and weapons smuggling) to grow, endangering the state. This anarchic state causes major instability in the Mano River region.

National security forces are too underfunded and unprepared to take charge of the country's security apparatus.

Mali

Mali has an estimated population of 15 million. It is one of the least developed countries in the world, ranking 182 of 186 in the Human Development Index. After a recession in 2012, Mali's economy grew by 5% in 2013 and it is expected to continue at this rate in 2014, mainly driven by good performances in the agriculture and gold sectors, coupled with the resumption of international aid. Gold production comprises 25% of GDP and 75% of export earnings. However, Mali's economic performance is highly susceptible to the effects of political instability, food insurgency and conflict in the north of the country.²⁹

Origins of insecurity

Underdevelopment, poverty and food insecurity have destabilised communities in northern Mali. A lack of government accountability for the northern region undermined the relationship with the capital, Bamako, located in the south. An inflow of people, weapons and ideas served to create more instability. The inflow of weapons also empowered northern communities to take a stand against Bamako. However, as the region became unstable, radical philosophies from the likes of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) spread through the region and found some willing and cooperative groups.

The 2012 coup d'état weakened the ability of the state to exert authority over the north. This opened a window for further action by groups in the north. A UN-backed intervention managed to counter the rebels' offensive but proved to be a motivating factor for further jihadist action across the region. The civil war became a fight against a perceived foreign occupiers backed by the United States, France and other Western allies. Government-backed militias have attacked both rebels across the north, spurring intercommunal clashes.

Organised crime such as drug trafficking has long been a major source of funding for insurgent groups across the Sahel. Huge profits have created a number of groups that have become better armed and more efficient. Many insurgent groups in Mali, regardless of whether they have a nationalist or religious base, have as their main driver the desire to displace state institutions and attain power and profit from unchecked activities, namely from the illicit drug trade.

Major protagonists and recent developments

The 2011 Sahel food crisis destroyed the livelihoods of many Malian families. The end of 2011 was marked by an influx of well-armed Tuaregs from Libya, who formed the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and demanded an independent Tuareg state. Rebels began successfully fighting the Malian army and took over some major cities in the north. Militant Islamist organisations – AQIM, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and Ansar Dine – also rushed to the region to take advantage of the crisis. The Tuareg rebels and the jihadists allied to fight the government forces.

Meanwhile, military officers led by Captain Amadou Sanogo staged a coup in March 2012, further destabilising the country. The officers had grown disgruntled with the mismanagement of the conflict by the Malian government. The jihadists finally sidelined the Tuareg and began their march to Bamako. In May 2012, the Northern Mali Liberation Front (FLNM) was created with the aim to fight the Tuareg and Islamist insurgencies. The FLNM is formed of ethnic militias from the so-called 'dark-skinned' ethnic groups from the north – the Shongai, Peul and Fulani.³⁰

In January 2013, France deployed troops following a request from the Malian interim government. The insurgents pulled back in the face of the French military might. Soon a UN force (MUNISMA) was deployed to complement French efforts. A peace agreement was reached in June 2013 between the interim government and the Tuareg rebel groups. It established an immediate cease-fire and negotiations on the transfer of Tuareg-occupied areas back to Malian administration and security forces. Under international pressure, presidential elections took place in July 2013. Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, a former prime minister, won by a landslide over Soumaila Cissé, who conceded defeat. Although the elections signified a near return to democracy, it is worth noting that army officers behind the 2012 coup were promoted: Sanogo became a general a few days after the election and was appointed to oversee reform of the armed forces. One week after Keïta was sworn in as president in September 2013, Tuareg rebels clashed with Malian forces. Two weeks later, the rebels suspended the peace agreement, alleging that the government had failed to release prisoners.

Despite the huge challenges, parliamentary elections were scheduled for 24 November 2013. Keïta's Rally for Mali (RPM) and his allies won 115 of 147 seats in the national assembly. The elections, deemed free and transparent by ECOWAS and the EU, were marred by a suicide attack that killed two UN Senegalese troops. Nonetheless, it marked the official return of Mali to democracy, and helped to legitimise the civilian government. The successful elections will also unlock \$3.25 billion in donations for reconstruction, suspended in the aftermath of the 2012 coup. The challenge will be to guarantee long-term stabilisation without alienating any of the northern communities.

Scenarios for 2014

Baseline: France withdraws a major part of their armed forces and are replaced by troops from other supporting countries. The military gains are consolidated and attempts made to establish a continuous presence and stable security situation. The United Nations has a continuous and prolonged involvement.

Plausible alternative: The political processes taking place in Libya and Tunisia fails and terrorist groups step up their attempts to regain lost territory, with spill-over effects in Mali. An influx of jihadists returning from Syria and other foreign fighters add to the levels of violence. This requires additional military capabilities from the international community in Mali and elsewhere and adds an increased political dimension to their mission. Major attacks across the area destabilise the Sahel region and Western and local forces increasingly clash with radical groups.

Instability spreads and insurgent victories over the joint UN-Malian force lead the army to threaten the newly formed government with a power change.

Wildcard: MUNISMA fails as an effective replacement for the French force, opening a window of opportunity for insurgents to step up their activities. The official return to democracy fails to deliver to northern communities, which grow increasingly disgruntled with the central government. Jihadist groups capitalise on the social and economic situation in the north and are able to step up their activities. Instability spreads and insurgent victories over the joint UN-Malian force lead the army to threaten the newly formed government with a power change.

Niger

Niger has a population of 17 million, over half of which live in poverty. Although Niger ranks last in the Human Development Index, in 2012 it registered one of the highest GDP growths in Africa, largely driven by extractive industries. Agriculture accounts for 40% of the country's GDP and employs about 80% of the population. Extractive industries comprise 70% of export earnings, the bulk of which is from uranium. Niger has recently become an oil exporter. The country is highly vulnerable to volatility in the weather, particularly droughts and floods, which can gravely affect livelihoods and the economy.³¹

Origins of insecurity

The Libyan civil war, international intervention in Mali and the military crackdown on Boko Haram militants in northern Nigeria has created an environment of instability across the Sahel. Weapons, ideas and fighters flow freely across borders and threaten Niger's stability. International terrorist networks operating in this region have been quick to target vulnerable assets.

The government's failure to tackle poverty, food insecurity, the misallocation of resources and rampant underdevelopment has led opposition parties to unite. Niger's dependence on earning from uranium exports makes the country highly vulnerable to changing French corporate interests. Furthermore, attacks on French interests in the country have resulted in the deployment of French troops in Nigerien territory.

Major protagonists and recent developments

March 2011 marked the return of Niger to civilian rule after the February 2010 coup d'état that ousted the increasingly authoritarian Mamadou Tandja. Mahamadou Issoufou, the main opposition leader during Tandja's presidency, was elected on a civilian platform (the military vowed to remain neutral) that promised to tackle poverty, halt the food crisis and guarantee a fair and equitable distribution of the wealth created from uranium exports.

However, Niger's intervention in Mali and Issoufou's decision to align with Western powers in order to try to contain and eliminate the terrorist threat has provided a justification for attacks by international terrorist organisations. French intervention following attacks on a uranium mine run by Areva underlines the strategic importance of uranium to the world's most nuclear-dependent country.³² In 2011, President Issoufou pledged to negotiate new mineral exploration contracts with the aim of increasing tax revenue. The contract with Areva expired on 31 December 2013 but the company refused to pay higher royalties; negotiations are now at an impasse.³³

With the military's influence significantly weakened, military officials were alleged to have planned to kill Issoufou in July 2011. If the plot had been successful, it would have made him the fifth Nigerien leader since independence to be dislodged by a military coup. As such, Issoufou has handled the armed forces with caution and been reluctant to increase defence expenditure.

Lack of government accountability led to the merger of 15 opposition parties under the Alliance for the Republic, Democracy and Reconciliation in Niger (ARDR). In late December 2013, 20,000 opposition supporters gathered in Niger's capital, Niamey, to protest against the government, in what was the largest show of unrest since Tandja was overthrown in 2010.

Underdevelopment and impoverishment has led an increasing number of youth to resort to criminal activities, while others have been attracted to Islamic extremism. A deteriorating economy combined with the greater operational capabilities of insurgent and criminal groups in Niger has led to a resurgence of narco-trafficking and resulted in increasingly violent clashes between security forces and drug smugglers.

Scenarios for 2014

Baseline: Militants continue their attacks on Nigerien territory, targeting security infrastructure and French interests. Such attacks result in further military interventions by the French armed forces. Increasing French interference in Nigerien affairs undermines uranium contract negotiations with Areva and preclude new exploration. This impasse interrupts taxation revenue flows. However, due to weakening demand for uranium since the Fukushima disaster, the country's dependence on mineral exports and its need to maintain the French security umbrella, an agreement is reached by mid-2014.

The recently united opposition is unable to oust Issoufou, neither via elections in 2015 nor a military coup. Army officials are reluctant to risk involvement when Western military and financial assistance is dependent on the status quo.

Plausible alternative: The government and Areva fail to reach an agreement in 2014. The resulting interruption of revenue flows leads the government to prioritise the allocation of increasingly scarce resources. Considering the threat posed by terrorist organisations, the armed forces continue to be prioritised over development.

Popular protests led by the opposition parties increase throughout 2014 as poverty and food security fail to be addressed. Although in the short term France focusses on stability, over the medium term the break down in the commercial relationship between Areva and Niger provokes Paris to seek a more suitable and sustainable leadership in Niamey.

Wildcards:

- (1) The commercial relationship between France and Niger becomes so disrupted that Niamey seeks other partners for the uranium mines. Countries such as China and India enter a hitherto French *chase gardée*, prompting a race for resources in the Sahel.
- (2) Faced with an intractable dispute with Issoufou and the prospect of losing its primary uranium supply, France motivates the military to oust the president and replace him with a more pro-Western figure. The coup deepens divisions within the military and destabilises the country further, allowing terrorist networks to exploit the power vacuum and increase their attacks. This is accompanied by a surge in criminal activity, including the drug trade and kidnappings, forcing French military intervention and thus recruiting more fighters to the extremists' cause.

Nigeria

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with around 170 million citizens from over 200 ethnic groups.³⁴ Oil comprises 90% of the country's exports and also finances 75% of the national budget. Despite the abundant oil wealth, Nigeria ranks 153 of 186 in the Human Development Index, signalling the failure of successive governments to transform strong economic growth into development. Regional disparities in employment, education and political representation are stark.

Origins of insecurity

The 1967-70 civil war gave rise to calls for regional control over resources and demands for self-determination that endure. The north dominated politics until the 1990s, at the expense of the rest of the country. A federal constitution was put in place but failed to appease demands for self-determination, increased representation, land rights and resources. The foremost division is between the Muslim-majority north and the Christian-majority south. Christianity and Islam converge in the Middle Belt region, where clashes regularly occur. Demands for President Goodluck Jonathan, a southerner, to give way for a northerner to take the presidency in 2015 culminated in the creation of a new political party largely comprised of northern politicians.

The shift from a mainly agricultural economy into the leading oil exporter in Africa has made Nigeria heavily reliant on oil revenues. Although Nigeria is a major exporter of crude, it is an importer of refined petroleum. This has led to an unsustainable subsidy designed to keep petrol and diesel prices low. Grievances over rising corruption, resource misallocation and a lack of development, have led to violent clashes, the creation of armed militias and illegal practices such as oil-theft, kidnappings and piracy.

Major protagonists and recent developments

High levels of corruption have plagued Nigeria since oil became the main source of revenue.³⁵ The oil subsidy is a heavy burden – estimated to have cost \$6 billion in 2013 – but an attempt to remove it in 2012 gave rise to nationwide riots and strikes. In recent years, oil revenues have been highly volatile due to the financial crisis, US shale gas exploration, criminal activities in the Niger Delta and piracy along the Gulf of Guinea.

Long-term economic mismanagement and negligence in the northern region of Nigeria have made it the most underdeveloped, poorly educated and impoverished region in the country. The violent Islamic extremist movement Boko Haram rose in this context. It has focused on the abolition of Western governance and is determined to implement a 'pure' form of Islamic Law. A splinter group named Ansaru has recently kidnapped and attacked international targets in Nigeria and neighbouring countries. Both of these groups have links with international terrorist networks and were recently designated terrorist organisations by the United States.³⁶ In 2013, the Nigerian federal government implemented a state of emergency and launched a military crackdown in the three northeastern states where the insurgents were active.

In the south, the Niger Delta's population has not benefited from oil revenues and has suffered environmental degradation. Protests escalated through the second half of the 1990s and into the next decade and led to violent clashes with security forces and attacks on international oil facilities, disrupting oil production. In order to prevent further damage to the national economy, then President Umaru Yar'Adua issued a general amnesty for Niger Delta militants in exchange for them giving up their weapons. The amnesty was reinforced when Jonathan, who is from the region, became president. Nevertheless, oil theft and piracy have risen and militant groups have threatened to recommence in their activities if Jonathan fails to be re-elected as president.

In order to temper north-south grievances, an informal agreement was made under which a president from one of the two regions appoints a deputy from the other. The death of Yar'Adua, a northerner, in 2010 resulted in the appointment of Jonathan, his deputy, as president. In 2011, Jonathan won the presidential election, which was perceived by northerners as a violation of the agreement and spurred violent clashes. The belief among northerners that Jonathan should not run for re-election in 2015 and disaffection with the authoritarian response to opposition within the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) led to the defection of prominent party members to the All Progressive Congress (APC). This was accompanied by harsh criticism from former President Olusegun Obasanjo, who had up until that point served as Jonathan's political godfather.

The APC is comprised of the four largest opposition parties and has eroded the PDP's majority in the House of Representatives. The majority of defectors are northerners, which arouses suspicions over APC's intentions. In a move that seems aimed at reconciliation inside the PDP, Jonathan has announced his intention to establish a national dialogue conference in order to assess the regional and ethnic grievances that have haunted Nigeria since independence.

The belief among northerners that Jonathan should not run for re-election in 2015 led to the defection of prominent party members to the All Progressive Congress.

Scenarios for 2014

Baseline: The incumbent Jonathan announces his intention to run for re-election in 2015. Jonathan is selected as the PDP's candidate, despite his party experiencing a significant loss of support and high-profile defections in 2013. This is because he still holds favour among the bulk of the Southeast, South-South and Middle Belt and he alone possesses the financial and technical resources to mount a successful presidential campaign. Although the ACP has incorporated the largest party in the southwest, it is largely comprised of northern politicians, which undermine its mass appeal by rekindling memories of the alliances that marked the last phase of the civil war.

As Nigeria prepares for the 2015 presidential elections, escalating tensions between those from the north and Southeast/South-South increase the degree of ethno-religious manipulation by political elites. The violent clashes that marked late 2013 become increasingly fierce throughout 2014, undermining political stability. These are echoed in parliament by northern attempts to impeach the southern president.

The Islamic insurgency in the north of the country continues and northern politicians seek to destabilise Jonathan by exploiting it. Intercommunal clashes become more frequent in the Middle Belt. In the Southeast, as the APC battles for political supremacy and is able to win over potential defectors, political rhetoric reignites the regional insurgency. Support for Jonathan hardens in the Niger Delta. This widespread tension results in a national dialogue conference. The federal government is forced to concede to demands from the Niger Delta in order to constrain violence and insurgency, with concessions in oil revenue allocation affecting the national budget.

In the Southeast, as the APC battles for political supremacy and is able to win over potential defectors, political rhetoric reignites the regional insurgency.

Plausible alternative: APC's growing power and influence in the two legislative chambers allows for the impeachment of Jonathan. Following impeachment, elections must be scheduled within three months. Therefore, the APC and PDP enter into a fierce political battle for the forthcoming elections, resulting in politically motivated violence.

Christians across the Middle Belt, Southeast and South-South, fear the return of northern-dominance. Niger Delta militants and southern self-determination groups are outraged by the impeachment of their president. The uncertain future precipitates an increase in attacks, kidnappings, oil theft and piracy. The increase in piracy along the Gulf of Guinea leads to international pressure on the Nigerian government to tackle the issue. However, the interim government is unable to create another military front in the south due to the heavy cost of the prolonged crackdown in the north and the already stretched economy. They are forced to grant concessions to the southern insurgents, including a renewed amnesty, which nonetheless fail to restore peace to the region.

Wildcards:

- (1) The government faces costly concessions to the Niger Delta region following Jonathan's impeachment. The loss of oil revenue prompts the federal government to launch an offensive against militants in the south, which leads to an all-out conflict with local militias, including a reborn Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF).
- (2) An APC-led government is elected and attempts to negotiate with Boko Haram by accommodating some of their demands in the northern states in order to reduce the massive costs inherent in the northern front. Southerners are concerned about this negotiation and further increase their insurgent activities. The north-south fault line creates fertile ground for a military coup and feeds secessionist claims across the south.

Senegal

Senegal is a majority-Muslim country that ranks 154 out of 187 in the Human Development Index.³⁷ The country's economy is expected to grow by 5% in 2014, driven by good harvests. More than 60% of the working population depend on agriculture and fisheries. The latter constitutes the main source of export earnings, with the result that the economy is exposed to volatility resulting from illegal foreign fishing and insecurity. Around half of the population lives in poverty and around 40% of the youth are unemployed.

Origins of insecurity

Senegal has been one of the most peaceful and stable countries in West Africa. But recent successful moves by the president to abolish the senate and prosecute the son of a former leader have aroused fears of a growing intolerance towards opposition. Senegal faces a multitude of security risks in the form of Islamic extremism, calls for secession from the Casamance region, narco-trafficking and instability in neighbouring Mali. These have so far been successfully dealt with by a professional and independent military.

Major protagonists and recent developments

The February-March 2012 presidential elections led to the defeat of President Abdoulaye Wade and his replacement with one-time protégé Macky Sall, a former prime minister and president of the national assembly.³⁸ In July 2012, Sall's coalition won parliamentary elections and in September of that year the senate was abolished, together with the post of vice president, in an alleged effort to save money for flood relief. However, critics argue that it was a move designed to weaken opposition. In 2013, Sall reshuffled his cabinet and appointed a new prime minister, Aminata Touré.

Senegal's religious and political life is largely dominated by Sufi Islamic structures. However, radical rhetoric – primarily Salafi and Wahhabi in nature – is growing, particularly among the unemployed youth.³⁹ Senegal is bordered by Mauritania and Mali, two countries where the fight against international jihadist movements is taking place. The country's alignment with the West through contributing troops to the multinational force in Mali places it in the crosshairs of jihadist groups and vulnerable to religiously-motivated eruptions.

The region of Casamance has endured a low-intensity conflict for decades. The main grievances behind the conflict are the region's underdevelopment and its perceived marginalisation at the hands of the ethnic majority in Senegal, the Wolof. There are barriers to peace, such as the split within the secessionist movement, the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC), and ethnic and religious differences. Nonetheless, both Sall's cabinet and the rebels seem inclined to negotiate peace. In 2012 the president allowed international mediation, a move that has resulted in the release of eight hostages.⁴⁰

Senegal is located in a region where the trade in illicit drugs and small arms is widespread.⁴¹ The instability in Casamance and Senegal's border with unstable Guinea-Bissau creates an attractive environment for drug cartels. Guinea-Bissau has historically served as a place for Casamance rebels to stockpile weapons, which has the potential to be exploited by others, such as jihadist groups.

The instability in Casamance and Senegal's border with unstable Guinea-Bissau creates an attractive environment for drug cartels.

Scenarios for 2014

Baseline: The Senegalese government faces a challenge from the political opposition. But a growing threat comes from the rise of radical Islam following accusations that the Sufi establishment has failed to address poverty and underdevelopment.

Progress is made in negotiations to resolve the Casamance conflict, though a settlement is not reached in 2014. Although the government and the international community have put forward efforts to curb separatism and criminal activities, the situation in neighbouring countries such as Guinea-Bissau influences events in Senegal throughout 2014. Guinea-Bissau remains the preferred outpost for narco-traffickers and arms smugglers, providing a base for approaching Senegal.

Plausible alternative: The insurgency in Casamance escalates as peace talks break down, posing a threat to law and order. Elections in neighbouring Guinea-Bissau bring about a stable, democratic government and narco-traffickers and arms smugglers cross into Casamance, where the security forces remain inefficient and corrupt.

Wildcard: The crackdown on militants across northern Mali and Mauritania causes some of those groups to seek refuge and base operations in Senegal. The country's alignment with the West then makes Senegal itself a target for attacks.

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is currently experiencing the fastest economic growth of any African country, albeit from a low base.⁴² Rich in diamonds and other minerals, the country's economy grew by 6% in 2011 and 16.7% in 2012, largely driven by the mining sector. Sierra Leone's economy is expected to grow 12.1% in 2014 as iron-ore projects become fully operational. It has only just climbed out of the bottom ten of the Human Development Index, but mining – a capital-intensive industry – is soon set to overcome agriculture – a labour-intensive sector – as the main contributor to GDP. Nearly half of the government's revenue derives from foreign aid.

Origins of insecurity

Following a prolonged civil war from 1991 to 2002, Sierra Leone emerged with its government institutions and economic infrastructure destroyed. As an emerging democracy, the political elites frequently risk their personal ambitions overcoming good governance. Sierra Leone faces a significant test in how it administers its new-found wealth, which has the potential to project the country towards a prosperous future or make it fall foul of the mineral resource curse. The rights of workers in Sierra Leone have been subjugated to the interests of mining companies and projects, underlining the importance of the equitable distribution of this wealth.

Major protagonists and recent developments

In September 2010, the UN Security Council removed the last remaining sanctions against Sierra Leone, recognising the installation of democracy and the total disarmament and demobilisation of combatants. In November 2012, the country organised presidential elections, which saw Ernest Bai Koroma re-elected. The polls marked the first since peace was restored in 2002 to be fully undertaken by the country's National Elections Commission, rather than with the United Nation's collaboration. The candidate for the opposition Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), Julius Maada Bio, a former brigadier and coup leader, denounced the elections as fraudulent. However, he appealed for calm and among his supporters and pledged to respect the outcome, a stark contrast to the 2007 elections.

A natural-resources boom and inflows of foreign direct investment have created positive expectations for the country's future. However, the economic and social impacts have so far been less than positive. The two companies behind iron-ore exploration pay substantially discounted taxes and ordinary people have yet to benefit from this source of national wealth. Furthermore, in April 2012 workers of a mine operated by London-headquartered African Minerals Ltd. in the town of Bumbuna were met with two days of violence from security forces following their demands to form a union and campaign for better pay.⁴³

A natural-resources boom and inflows of foreign direct investment have created positive expectations for the country's future. However, the economic and social impacts have so far been less than positive.

Scenarios for 2014

Baseline: The 2012 Presidential elections represented an extremely positive development for Sierra Leone, especially when contrasted with 2007. The appeal for calm by the opposition is not broken throughout 2014. The war is still fresh in peoples' minds and the elites and the public in general do not want to return to violent chaos. Nonetheless, similar clashes to the one in Bumbuna occur. The priority for local elites is to protect from disruption flows of foreign direct investment, and the personal benefits that this brings, and popular protests continue to be silenced.

Plausible alternative: Bio encourages SLPP activists to undertake public demonstration of frustration at the slow pace at which prosperity is trickling down, particularly to the party's southern heartland. This is driven by the tensions between Bio, who wants to remain as SLPP presidential candidate, and his contenders for the role, primarily the parliamentary leader, Dr Bernadette Lahai, but also Kandeh Yumkella and Andrew Keili.

Wildcard: Drawing on the abundance of arms in Sierra Leone, a rebel group is formed to target mining installations and foreign-owned businesses through kidnap and ransom in order to extract concessions from the government and foreign mining companies.

The 2012 Presidential elections represented an extremely positive development for Sierra Leone, especially when contrasted with 2007.

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the civil society intelligence agency

Open Briefing
27 Old Gloucester Street
Bloomsbury
London WC1N 3AX

t 020 7193 9805
info@openbriefing.org
www.openbriefing.org